2/22/61

DYER UNION CHURCH
Wednesday evening Lenten Services
Mr. John H. Buchanan, Pastor Mrs. Dorothy Gettler, Organist

Prayer before Worship:
O Almighty God, from whom every good prayer cometh, who pourest out on all who desire it the spirit of grace and of supplication: Deliver us, when we draw nigh to Thee, from coldness of heart and wanderings of mind, that with steadfast thoughts and kindled affections we may worship Thee in spirit and in truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PRELUDE
CALL TO WORSHIP
*HYMN: "I Love to Tell the Story" # 37
*INVOCATION AND LORD'S PRAYER
MUSICAL INTERLUDE
RESPONSIVE READING - Page 646 of Hymnal
*THE APOSTLES CREED

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost; Born of the Virgin Mary; Suffered under Pontius Pilate; Was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; The third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven; And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; The Holy Catholic Church; The Communion of Saints; The Forgiveness of sins; The Resurrection of the body; And the Life everlasting. Amen.

*GLORIA PATRI
HYMN (seated) - "We've a Story to Tell to the Nations" #121
MUSICAL INTERLUDE
SCRIPTURE - I Corinthians 2:1-16
EVENING PRAYER
MUSICAL INTERLUDE
SERMON - "The Bible - The Word of God"
*HYMN - "How Firm a Foundation" #2
ANNOUNCEMENTS
THE ACT OF DEDICATION
*PRAYER OF DEDICATION
*HYMN: "Savior Again to Thy Dear Name We Raise" #66
POSTLUDE

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Tonight's sermon title will be the subject of open discussion next Wednesday night at 7:30. A hymn sing will be held before the discussion and coffee will be served afterward.

Thursday: Choir Rehearsal 6:30 p.m.
Men's Fellowship 7:30 p.m.

Friday: Ladies Aid Bake Sale, 6:00 to 8:30 p.m. Church Basement

BEFORE I BEGIN TALKING ABOUT THE BIBLE LET ME SAY THAT ONE SERMON AND ONE DISCUSSION PERIOD ARE BARELY ENOUGH TO CRACK OPEN THE PROBLEM LET ALONE DO ANYTHING CONSTRUCTIVE. BEFORE ONE EMBARKS ON A CONSTRUCTIVE APPROACH THERE IS A LOT OF GROUND TO BE CLEARED, A LOT OF THICK UNDERBRUSH TO BE CHAOPPED AWAY--THIS IS WHAT I HOPE WE CAN ACCOMPLISH IN THE NEXT TWO WEEKS. THEN I HOPE YOU WILL TAKE IT FROM THERE. AS I WILL POINT OUT LATER THE LACK OF KNOWLEDGE WITH WHICH THE AVERAGE CHRISTIAN APPROACHES THE BIBLE IS PHENOMENAL AND HEREIN LIES ONE OF THE CHURCH'S MOST PRESSING PROBLEMS. AGAIN LET ME VOICE MY HOPE THAT MY CONSTANT HAMMERING AT THIS POINT WILL PROMPT YOU TO TAKE STEPS TO CORRECT THIS SITUATION.

SURROUNDING THE BIBLE ARE LAYERS OF SUPERSITTUTION, LEGENDS AND MYTHS, AND OF NECESSITY I WILL HAVE TO CLEAR THESE AWAY. I HOPE YOU WILL NOT THINK IT IRREVERENT AND BLASPHEMOUS, BECAUSE IT IS ANYTHING THAN THAT. WE ARE ASSIGNED THE TASK OF RESTORING THE WORD OF GOD TO ITS PROPER STATUS AND TO DO THIS REQUIRES THE REMOVAL OF ALL HUMAN SUPERSTITUTION AND TRADITION. ONE SUCH SUPERSTITUTION THAT I HAVE HEARD IS OF A MARINE WHOSE LIFE WAS SAVED BECAUSE THE NEW TEST. ~~WAS~~ IN HIS POCKET STOPPED A B BULLET. THE MARINE INTERPRETED THIS AS THE MYSTERIOUS POWER OF THE WORD OF GOD AND ON THE SPOT DECIDED TO BECOME A GOSPEL MINISTER. OPINIONS LIKE THESE ARE NOT ONLY FOOLISH BUT ALSO DO MUCH TO DEGRADE AND PERVERT THE MEANING OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

THE BEST STARTING POINT IN ANY DISCUSSION OF THE BIBLE WOULD BE THE REALIZATION THAT IT IS A BOOK THAT SIMPLY IS NOT READ. COLONEL SPENCER CHAPMAN RECORDS IN HIS BOOK THE JUNGLE IS NEUTRAL HOW ON ONE OCCASION IN MALAYA DURING THE LAST WAR, WHILE CONCEALED FROM THE JAPANESE FOR SOME MONTHS WITH NOTHING WHATEVER TO DO, HE ATTEMPTED TO TAKE IN HAND A TASK WHICH HE HAD PROMISED HIMSELF MANY TIMES TO FULFILL, NAMELY TO READ THE NEW TESTAMENT. BUT WHEN IT CAME TO THE POINT OF MAKING A START, HE AND HIS COMPANIONS FOUND THAT THEY COULD MAKE NOTHING OF IT. INSTEAD THEY READ THE OXFORD DICTIONAEY, THEIR ONLY OTHER READING MATERIAL, FROM COVER TO COVER, BUT NOT THE BIBLE.

IT IS VERY COMFORTING TO HEAR THE CLAIM THAT THE BIBLE IS A BEST SELLER YEAR AFTER YEAR. BUT A HORSE OF A DIFFERENT COLOR INDEED IS THE FACT THAT OF ALL THE BEST SELLING BOOKS THE BIBLE IS THE LEAST READ. A RECENT NATION WIDE SURVEY IN ENGLAND TURNED UP THE DISCONCERTING FACT THAT THE VAST MAJORITY OF CHURCH MEN SPENT LESS THAN ONE HOUR A YEAR READING THE BIBLE.

I COULD GO ON FOR THE REST OF THE TIME WITH A BARRAGE OF FACTS POINTING OUT HOW BAD THE SITUATION IS BUT THAT WOULD BE SENSELESS. YOU ARE AWARE OF THE PROBLEM, IT EXISTS EVERYWHERE, WE DO BETTER TO ASK WHY DOES IT EXIST AND WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT.

ONE OF THE PERTINENT REASONS FOR THE LACK OF BIBLE READING IS THE NATURE OF THE TEXT ITSELF, ITS CONSTRUCTION AND ITS LANGUAGE. AS THE OLD TEST. SAGA OF A PEOPLE AND

THEIR GOD WAS WRITTEN DOWN IT WAS DONE SO IN THE LANGUAGE OF THE PARTICULAR ERA. THE NEW TESTAMENT WAS WRITTEN LIKEWISE IN THE ROUGH ARAMAIC VERNACULAR SPOKEN BY THE PALENTINIAN PEASANTS, OR IN THE CRUDE FORM OF GREEK THAT WAS SPOKEN THROUGHOUT MOST OF THE THEN KNOWN WORLD. THERE WERE NO CHAPTERS AND VERSES, NO ARBITRARY STOPPING PLACES: IT WAS A LIVID AND DYNAMIC MESSAGE WRITTEN IN THE COMMON LANGUAGE AND STYLE OF THE PEOPLE. A FEW HUNDRED YEARS LATER IT WAS TRANSLATED INTO LATIN BY A MAN NAMED JEROME, BROKEN DOWN INTO CHAPTERS AND VERSES: AND FOR 1,000 YEARS NO OTHER TRANSLATION APPEARED. THEN AS THE DARK AGES BEGAN TO WAIN AND THE SPIRIT OF RENNAISANCE AND REFORMATION SWEPT OVER THE EUROPE MEN REALIZED THAT IF THE WORD OF GOD WAS TO SPEAK TO THEM THEY MUST BE ABLE TO READ IT IN THEIR OWN TONGUE. IN 1611 A GROUP OF SCHOLARS COMMISSIONED BY KING JAMES COMPLETED AND PUBLISHED A TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE THAT FOR 350 YEARS WAS ACCEPTED AS THE AUTHORIZED VERSION. IT WAS DONE IN THE HEIGHT OF THE VICTORIAN AGE AND ITS STYLE AND LINGUISTICS ARE AN EXAMPLE OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AT ITS FINEST HOUR. ONE DRAW BACK REMAINS, HOWEVER, THE LANGUAGE OF 17TH CENT. ENGLAND IS NOT OUR OWN: AND THE BEAUTY OF ITS LOFTY STYLE IS DUBIOUS MERIT IN LIGHT OF THE INEVITABLE OBSCURITY INVOLVED IN AN OUT OF DATE LANGUAGE. AS YOU WELL KNOW WE ARE FORTUNATE IN HAVING THE REVISED STANDARD VERSION WHICH AGAIN HAS TRANSLATED THE BIBLE INTO THE LANGUAGE OF THE CONTEMPORARY AGE. BUT STILL THE SERIOUS STUDENT OF THE BIBLE IS PLAGUED BY VERSES AND CHAPTERS, THAT OFT TIMES STOP AND BEGIN SMACK IN THE MIDDLE OF A CONTINUOUS NARRATIVE.

THE BEST WE CAN DO IN OUR READING IS TRY TO IGNORE CHAPTERS AND VERSES BUT AGAIN THIS IS A DIFFICULT TASK.

THERE ARE TRANSLATIONS OF THE BIBLE THAT FOREGO ALL CHAPTER AND VERSE HEADINGS, ARE WRITTEN ON A FULL PAGE SPREAD, AND ARE EVEN MORE ASSIMILATED WITH OUR LANGUAGE THAN THE REVISED STANDARD VERSION. THE MOST POPULAR OF THESE IS J.B. PHILLIP'S TRANSLATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT: ~~SHOW AND DEMONSTRATE~~: I WOULD HOPE THAT THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE SERIOUSLY CONCERNED ABOUT GOD'S WORD SPEAKING DIRECTLY TO YOU WOULD OWN A COPY OF THIS EXCELLENT TRANSLATION.

THE THREE INSTITUTIONS IN WHICH BIBLE STUDY COULD OCCUR SCHOOLS, CHURCH AND HOMES, HAVE PROVED HOPELESSLY INADEQUATE TO THEIR TASK. THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS HAVE BEEN SO ADAMANT IN THEIR SEPARATION FROM THE CHURCH THAT DAILY BIBLE READING IS BECOMING A THING OF THE PAST AND BIBLICAL STUDY UNHEARD OF. IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF CHURCH AND STATE I SUPPOSE THIS IS THE ONLY THING TO DO, BUT UNKNOWINGLY PUBLIC EDUCATION HAS LOST ONE VERY IMPORTANT ASPECT OF ITS TASK: AND THAT IS EDUCATION OF SPIRIT AS WELL AS MIND. WITH THE FURTHER DIVORCE OF RELIGION AND EDUCATION: THE LATTER HAS LOST ANY BASIS FOR MORAL INTEGRITY OR ETHICAL LEARNING. LEAVE THAT TO THE CHURCH IT IS SAID!

THE CHURCH, ON THE OTHER HAND, CANNOT DO IT ALONE. THE SUNDAY SCHOOL, A PLACE WHERE BIBLICAL STUDY BELONGS, IS PLAGUED BY THE LACK OF TIME, MONEY AND PRACTICALLY NO INTEREST WHATSOEVER. I AM NOT HERE REFERRING TO OUR OWN PROBLEM ALONE BECAUSE IT IS UNIVERSAL. SUNDAY SCHOOL BEGINS AT 9:45 and ends 3/4 of an hour later. of THAT 1/2 AN HOUR, OPTIMISTICALLY, CAN BE DEVOTED TO ACTUAL STUDY. I DON'T NEED TO PUSH THIS ANY FURTHER EITHER, THE TIME ELEMENT ITSELF IS SO PATHETIC IT NEEDS NO FURTHER EXPLANATION. THE THIRD INSTITUTION, AND THE MOST CRUCIAL OF ALL, IS THE ONE MOST LACKING AND THAT IS THE HOME. THIS IS A VERY DEEP PROBLEM AND I CANNOT TREAT IT FULLY ACCEPT TO SAY THAT SHOULD PARENTS COOPERATE WITH THEIR CHURCH, SHOULD THEY SHOW JUST A LITTLE INTERESTED CONCERN, THE SITUATION COULD BE REMEDIED. FAMILY DEVOTIONS ARE ALSO A THING OF THE PAST, WHO EVER HEARD OF A FAMILY READING THE BIBLE AND PRAYING TOGETHER? IT IS A BEAUTIFUL THING, BUT SO VERY RARE.

GOING BACK FOR A MINUTE TO CHRISTIAN EDUCATION, THIS CHURCH IS BLESSED WITH A GROUP OF SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS WHO ARE EFFICIENT, HARD WORKING, CAPABLE AND ABOVE ALL CONCERNED. ALL TOO FREQUENTLY, HOWEVER, THEY ARE FACEDWITH TWO OR THREE PUPILS.

I, AND I THINK I CAN SPEAK FOR MOST MINISTERS, WOULD BE JOYFUL AT THE OPPORTUNITY TO OPERATE A FULL TIME CHURCH SCHOOL, MEETING ONE HOUR A DAY. THIS SUGGESTION, IN THE PAST, HAS ONLY DRAWN SARCASTIC SNEERS AND A SYMPATHETIC SMILE OR TWO.

HOW CAN JOHNNIE DO THAT? HE DOESN'T GET HOME FROM FOOTBALL PRACTICE TILL 6:00 AND THEN HE HAS TO GO TO THIS MEETING OR THAT ~~ETC. AD INFINITUM~~ & SO ON. UNDERLYING THE WHOLE PATHETIC CONVERSATION IS THE IMPLICATION THAT IS OBVIOUS, "WHY PASTOR, DO YOU MEAN THAT BIBLE STUDY IS AS IMPORTANT AS FOOTBALL AND THE BOY SCOUTS? DO YOU MEAN TO TELL ME THAT STUDY OF THE BIBLE IS AS IMPORTANT AS ALGEBRA AND DRIVERS TRAINING? WHY DON'T BE SILLY!" BECAUSE ~~SINCE~~ BIBLE STUDY AND TRAINING HAVE BEEN HOPELESSLY INADEQUATE A STIUATION HAS ARISEN AND DEVELOPED OVER THE PAST ONE HUNDRED YEARS OR SO THAT HAS MADE BIBLICAL ~~STUDY~~ understanding ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE. SCIENCE AND RELIGION WERE DRIVEN APART AND A SPLIT OCCURED IN CHRISTIANITY ITSELF THAT HAS NEVER BEEN RECONCILED. SCIENCE AND RELIGION WERE FORCED TO CHOOSE UP SIDES. TWO AREAS THAT ARE NATURAL ALLIES WERE MADE ENEMIES AND TO THIS DAY, IN THE MINDS OF MANY, ONE CANNOT BE SCIENTIFIC AND RELIGIOUS. ALL THIS TOOK PLACE OVER A MISUNDER-STANDING/OR RATHER THE LACK OF ANY UNDERSTANDING/ OF HOLY SCRIPTURES.

IN TENNESSEE A SCHOOL TEACHER NAMED SCOPES WAS TEAC ING THE THEORY OF EVOLUTION TO HIS BIOLOGY STUDENTS. THE ISSUE WAS RAISED THAT THE CREATION ACCOUNT IN GENESIS MENTIONED NOTHING OF EVOLUTION AND THE BATTLE WAS ON. OF ALL THINGS A LAW SUIT APPEARED FEATURING A VERBAL BATTLE BETWEEN THE FAMED ORATOR WILLIAM JENNINGS BRIAN WHO SAID THAT IF THE BIBLE STATED THAT JONAH SWALLOWED THE WHALE HE WOULD BELIEVE THAT TOO! AND

AND CLARENCE DARROW THE ERUDITE AND FAMOUS CHICAGO LAWYER. THE RESULTS OF THE TRIAL LOCALLY WERE NEGLIGIBLE BUT ON THE WORLD WIDE LEVEL A GAP WAS CREATED, A BATTLE FIELD. SCIENTISTS AND THINKING PEOPLE EVERYWHERE WERE FORCED TO IDENTIFY CHRISTIANITY WITH IGNORANCE: CHRISTIANS ON THE OTHER HAND REGARDED SCIENCE AND EDUCATION AS COLD AND CYNICAL, AND ANTI RELIGION. BECAUSE OF THE LEGAL DISPUTE BOTH SIDES TOOK STANDS AND PUSHED THEIR VIEWS TO A POINT ORDINARILY UNTHINKABLE. DEFENDERS OF THE BIBLE RETREATED MORE AND MORE TO STRICT CONSERVATISM, AN ATTITUDE THAT HAS NOT ONLY THWARTED BIBLICAL STUDY BUT MADE AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE SCRIPTURES AN IMPOSIBILITY. BOOKS HAVE BEEN WRITTEN ON THE SUBJECT DEFENDING BOTH SIDES OF THE SELF MADE BATTLE, SO I CAN HARDLY GO INTO IT IN DETAIL HERE. LET IT BE SAID THOUGH THAT TO PUT THE BIBLE BESIDE A BOOK OF BIOLOGY OR HISTORY AND TO COMPARE THE TWO IS A DEGRADATION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE. BIOLOGY AND ALL SCIENCE IS CONCERNED WITH THE HOW, HISTORY WITH THE WHEN, AND INFINITELY MORE IMPORTANT THE SCRIPTURES DEAL WITH THE WHY - NOT HOW LONG CREATION TOOK BUT WHY IT TOOK PLACE. THE IMPORTANT POINT IN THE ADAM AND EVE STORY IS NOT THAT THOUSANDS OF YEARS AGO THERE WERE SERPANTS THAT SPOKE. WHAT IS BEING STATED HERE IS AN ACCURATE DESCRIPTION OF ALL OF MANKIND. ADAM AND EVE ARE YOU AND I, OUR ROOT SIN IS PRIDE, THE REFUSAL TO OBEY THE WILL OF GOD: AND THE RESULT OF THIS IS A SEPARATION FROM GOD. TO TRY TO FORCE GENESIS TO BE A BIOLOGY LESSON IS

AN INSULT TO THE FAR REACHING WISDOM AND INSIGHT OF THE AUTHOR AND ALSO AN ACT OF BLASPHEMY AGAINST GOD'S WORD.

CHRISTIANITY DOES NOT COWER AND HIDE FROM SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND DISCOVERY, RATHER WE WELCOME ANY AND ALL NEW STEPS IN UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD OF NATURE AS MORE EVIDENCE OF GOD'S LOVE AND MIRACULOUS HANDIWORK.

THIS RETREAT TO DOGNATISM AND FEUDAMENTALISM MUST NOT OCCUR IF WE ARE TO TRULY UNDERSTAND THE WORD OF GOD.

SO FAR I HAVE BEEN SPEAKING ONLY TO THE EXTREMITIES OF THE PROBLEM SO NOW LET US TURN TO AN UNDERSTANDING FOR OURSELVES. THERE ARE MANY SUGGESTED WAYS OF READING THE BIBLE PERSONALLY. SOME BELIEVE THAT JUST OPENING IT AND READING THE VERSE THE EYE FALLS ON IS SUFFICIENT. THE STORY IS TOLD OF A MAN THAT PRACTICED THIS AND ONE DAY HE OPENED AND READ "HE WENT AND HANGED HIMSELF" NOT THINKING THIS VERY INSPIRING HE TRIED AGAIN AND THIS TIME READ THE VERSE "GO AND DO LIKEWISE". ANOTHER METHOD IS TO READ THE BIBLE FROM BEGINNING TO END. I FEAR THAT ONE WOULD NOT GET FURTHER THAN THE THIRD OR FOURTH BOOK THIS WAY. THE ONLY WAY TO READ IS A BOOK AT A TIME, STOPPING WHEREEVER A PARTICULAR NARRATIVE COMES TO AN END. IN THE NEW TESTAMENT A GOOD PLACE TO BEGIN IS BY READING THE GOSPEL OF MARK IN A SITTING, IT IS TERSE AND EXCITING WHEN READ IN THAT MANNER, AND I'M SURE IF YOU'VE NEVER DONE IT BEFORE YOU WILL